

Focus Indicators

FOR TEACHING IN
2020-2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new and unique context for teaching and learning. While prioritizing a safe return to in-person learning, districts are also implementing hybrid or fully remote learning models over the course of the 2020-21 school year. In alignment with DESE's [Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020](#), this resource supports school and district leaders, professional development providers, and other educators to **focus meaningful supervision and feedback on critical practices for teachers in all learning models during the COVID-19 pandemic**, while allowing for important innovations and learning as educators navigate these new models.

FOCUS INDICATORS

CLICK ON AN INDICATOR TO GET STARTED

I-A [Curriculum & Planning](#)

III-B [Family Collaboration](#)

II-B [Learning Environment](#)

IV-A [Reflection](#)

II-D [Cultural Proficiency](#)

IV-C [Professional Collaboration](#)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Focus Indicators are informed by the following guiding principles, which reflect the unique context of teaching and learning in the year ahead:

- Prioritize the **social-emotional wellbeing of students and educators** as the foundation for effective teaching and learning
- Provide all students with **access to grade-level instruction** and essential content
- **Strive for coherence** within and across grade levels, subject areas, and learning settings
- **Engage students and families** in learning in a meaningful and consistent manner
- Promote **culturally responsive, anti-racist teaching and leading practices** that aim directly to disrupt patterns of inequities and systems of oppression against Black/Latinx/Asian/Indigenous/Mixed race communities

EACH INDICATOR PAGE FEATURES:



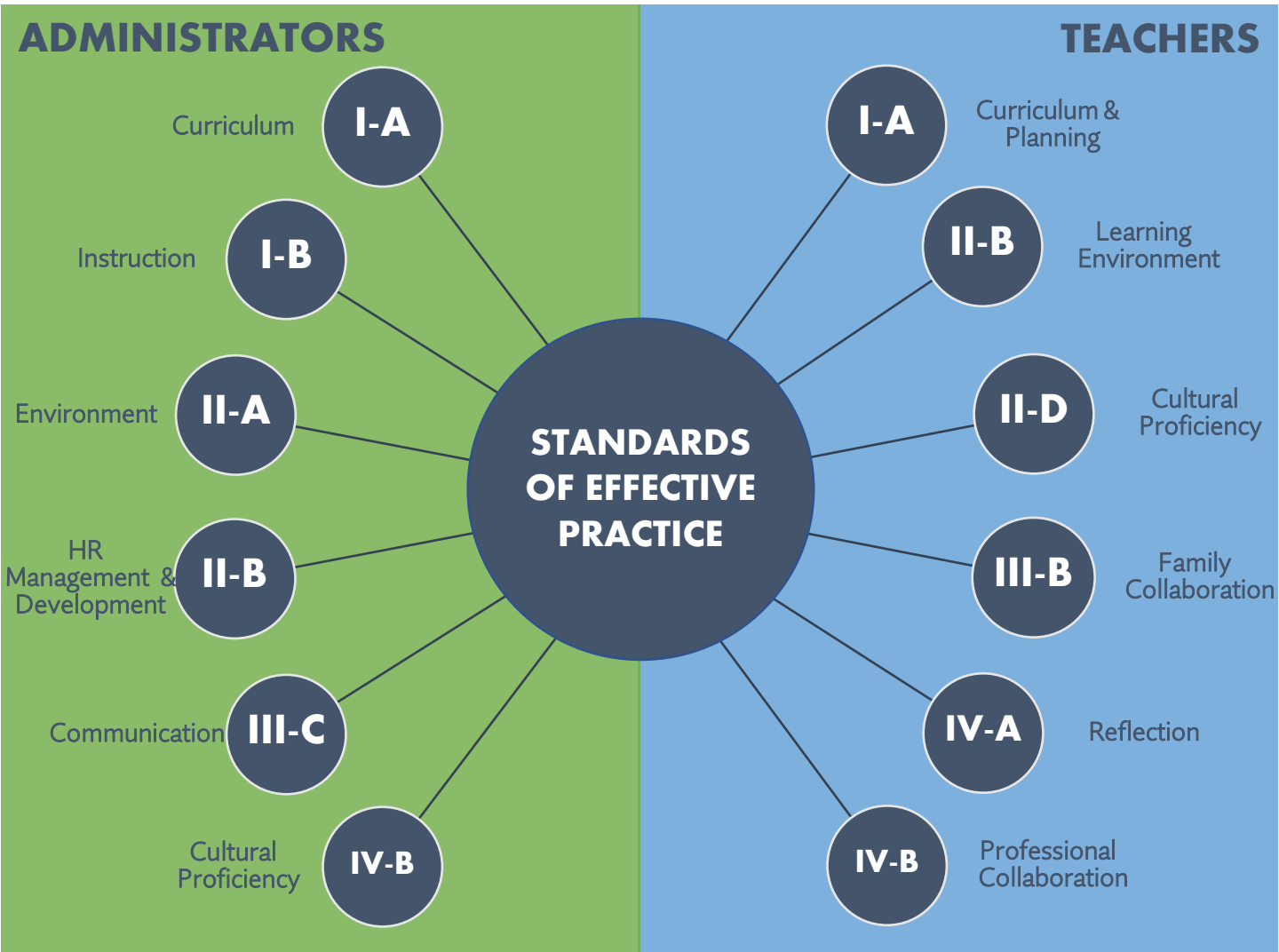
1. **Standard and Indicator Description**
2. **Key Practices**, adapted from elements associated with the Focus Indicator to highlight practices of specific relevance to the unique context of the 2020-21 school year.
3. **Focus Points for Feedback, Collaboration, and Support** provide examples of specific practices within this context.
4. **Supportive Resources**

The following definitions were approved by the MA Board of Elementary & Secondary Education in June 2020. We define **remote learning** as **no in-person instruction**, where instruction occurs through synchronous and/or asynchronous teaching in virtual formats and includes 1) procedures to ensure that all students participate, including a system for tracking attendance and engagement, 2) alignment to state standards, 3) policies for grading students' remote academic work; and 4) regular communication with students' parents and guardians. We define **hybrid learning** as **a mix of in-person and remote instruction**.

Overview

2020-2021 FOCUS INDICATORS

The Focus Indicators highlight the highest priority practices for teaching and leading during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because teachers and administrators depend on one another to be effective in meeting the needs of every student, the Focus Indicators for teachers and administrators are complimentary.



GENERAL RESOURCES

[Remote Teaching and Learning Module Series](#) | DESE

[Supports and Resources for Educator Evaluation Implementation in 2020-2021](#) | DESE

[Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning](#)
LearnLaunch

[Restart & Recovery: Considerations for Teaching and Learning](#) | Council of Chief State School Officers

[Guide: TNTP's Re-imagining Teaching in a Blended Classroom](#) | The Learning Accelerator and TNTP

STANDARD I
**CURRICULUM,
PLANNING,
AND
ASSESSMENT**

I-A Curriculum & Planning

Knows the subject matter well, has a good grasp of child development and how students learn, and designs effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measurable outcomes.

KEY PRACTICES

Implement standards-aligned units and lessons with clear objectives, challenging tasks, and appropriate pacing, sequencing, resources, and support adaptations for English learners and students with disabilities.

Provide differentiated, culturally responsive learning experiences that enable each student to access the curriculum and progress toward learning goals.

Engage students in learning experiences that enable them to acquire complex knowledge and subject-specific skills and vocabulary.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Leveraging a high-quality instructional materials as the starting point for tailored instruction
- ▶ Ensuring that each lesson and unit is purposefully enacted to support all students to acquire the essential content of their grade-level, regardless of their starting point
- ▶ Sequencing instruction such that content builds logically and learning experiences are clearly and consistently structured
- ▶ Constructing student-centered learning experiences that build on students' assets—their identity, cultural and language background, interests, and aspirations—to make the learning relevant and engaging
- ▶ Encouraging student agency and engagement by delivering content across multiple learning modalities, offering multiple entry points, and providing choice within assignments
- ▶ Leveraging ESL/classroom teacher collaboration to construct instructional activities that tap into students' cultural and family backgrounds and can take place in a language that families feel the most comfortable with
- ▶ Integrating into units and lessons authentic opportunities to help students process and make meaning of current and historical events
- ▶ Engaging each and every student in rigorous tasks that accelerate learning in essential, grade-level content
- ▶ Ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources at home (e.g. manipulatives, texts, foundational skills practice materials) aligned to essential content and learning targets
- ▶ Sequencing deeper tasks when in-person to promote discourse and facilitate connections among students' ideas, while leveraging technology for small group collaboration when in remote settings
- ▶ Leveraging technology to help make student thinking and learning visible

RESOURCES

[National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, 3rd ed](#)
Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance

[Research-Based Engagement Strategies](#) | *Council of Chief State School Officers*

[Learning Aspirations for ELA and Math in Distance Learning Models](#) | *Instruction Partners*

[Remote Teaching and Learning Module 2: Curriculum & Planning](#) | *DESE*

II-B

Learning Environment

**STANDARD II
TEACHING ALL
STUDENTS**

Creates and maintains a safe and collaborative learning environment that motivates students to take academic risks, challenge themselves, and claim ownership of their learning.

KEY PRACTICES

Use rituals, routines, and appropriate responses that create and maintain a safe learning environment (physical, intellectual, digital) where all students feel seen, heard, and respected.

Develop students' relationship and communication skills with both the teacher and their peers by providing opportunities for students to learn in groups with diverse peers and facilitating meaningful academic discourse.

Cultivate learning experiences across learning platforms (e.g. in-person, virtual, independent) that guide students to identify their strengths, interests, and needs; problem-solve; ask for support when appropriate; take academic risks; and challenge themselves to learn

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Establishing consistent routines across in-person and remote settings and routines that are unique to specific settings
- ▶ Co-creating norms with students for safe, collaborative, and culturally responsive behavior when engaging in digital learning environments
- ▶ Regularly asking students for feedback on how remote learning is going in order to inform improvements
- ▶ Making individual connections with students before school starts and throughout the school year
- ▶ Providing students opportunities to collaborate in both synchronous (e.g. live, online discussions) and asynchronous instruction (e.g. discussion boards, peer reviews of student work, independent work)
- ▶ Focusing on inquiry and reflection as strategies for engagement as well as for ensuring learning
- ▶ Holding students accountable for their effort and engagement across learning settings (in-person and remote)
- ▶ Ensuring students receive regular feedback on work and participation using an asset-based feedback approach that includes making positive connections with students, acknowledging the difficulty of the task, affirming students' ability to succeed, and providing specific feedback that advances learning

RESOURCES

[Distance Learning for ELLs: Planning Instruction](#) | *Colorín Colorado*

[Building Developmental Relationships During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) | *Search Institute*

[Integrating SEL in a Distance Learning World](#) | *Transforming Education*

[Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19](#) | *National Association of School Psychologists*

[Supporting Students Through Coronavirus](#) | *Teaching Tolerance*

[Supporting Student Resilience and Well-Being with Trauma-Informed Care: Educator Self-Assessment & Planning Tool](#) | *Center for Great Teachers & Leaders*

[Supporting Students with Disabilities in K-12 Online and Blended Learning](#) | *Michigan Virtual Learning Institute*

[Supporting Student Collaboration in a Virtual Setting: General Education and Small Group Services](#) | *Marshall Street*

[Remote Teaching and Learning Module 3: Learning Environment](#) | *DESE*

II-D Cultural Proficiency

Actively creates and maintains an environment in which students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are respected.

KEY PRACTICES

Establishes an environment in which students demonstrate respect for and affirm their own (self-awareness) and others' (social awareness) differences related to background, identity, language, strengths, and challenges.

[from I-A: Curriculum & Planning]
Provide differentiated, culturally responsive learning experiences that enable each student to access the curriculum and progress toward learning goals.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Prioritizing authentic, culturally-responsive relationship-building that center students' lived experiences
- ▶ Shaping learning and discussions around topics of interest to students that reflect multiple perspectives, cultural differences, and backgrounds
- ▶ Constructing student-centered learning experiences that build on students' assets—their identity, cultural and language background, interests, and aspirations—to make the learning relevant and engaging
- ▶ Planning lessons that incorporate knowledge of students' cultural background/practices into the teaching of content
- ▶ Building understanding and awareness through communal learning and collaborative worktime, especially within e-learning spaces
- ▶ Interrupting moments of bias or racism, whether spoken or read, and using those moments to model for students how to understand and address them going forward
- ▶ Seeking out the perspectives, feedback, and voices of all students and families in the classroom learning community and incorporating those voices into decision-making around remote teaching and learning environments.
- ▶ Considering and responding to the ways that issues of equity and access affect students' remote learning experiences and environments
- ▶ Using data (e.g., attendance, assessment, student feedback, formal discipline) to identify and disrupt inequities in access, treatment, and achievement in your classroom
- ▶ Regularly reflecting on one's own biases, attitudes, and assumptions about students and families and adjusting practice accordingly

RESOURCES

[Challenging Assumptions Reflection Tool](#) | *Flamboyant Foundation*

[SEL as a Lever for Equity](#) | *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)*

[Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development](#) | *DESE*

[Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Schools and Classrooms](#) | *DESE*

[Black Lives Matter at School](#) | *Black Lives Matter at School*

[Tools for Anti-Racist Teaching](#) | *PBS*

III-B Family Collaboration

Collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school.

KEY PRACTICES

Articulate and provide families with clear, user-friendly expectations for student learning and behavior in both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences, translated into home languages when applicable.

Communicate with families about the curriculum regularly throughout the year in a culturally proficient manner that supports collaboration around individual student learning and progress.

FOCUS FOR FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Engaging with families to facilitate clarity around attendance, grading policies, and participation requirements in remote learning settings
- ▶ Providing support to families and students on how to use online platforms and digital tools, including language or translation features, student privacy policies, and norms and expectations for building a respectful online community before learning begins
- ▶ Connecting with families early on and using systems to maintain regular two-way communication throughout the year
- ▶ Regularly reaching out and listening to families about their student's learning and progress while demonstrating understanding of and respect for different home languages, cultures, and values
- ▶ Sharing concrete strategies for supporting learning at school and at home (including appropriate adaptations for students with disabilities or limited English proficiency), while minimizing the need for parental instruction and oversight as feasible
- ▶ Encouraging families of English learners to use their home language when supporting their children's learning, reinforcing the message to those families that they can support and continue their children's progress in their home language
- ▶ Regularly asking families for feedback on how remote learning is going, and how it could be improved

RESOURCES

[Strategies to Engage Unreached Families](#) | Flamboyant Foundation

[Getting Started with Real Family Engagement During Distance Learning](#) | Flamboyant Foundation

[Rethinking Family Engagement During School Closures](#) | Teaching Tolerance

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Family Engagement in the Time of COVID-19 and Remote Learning, and Always](#) | Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative at the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

[Remote Teaching and Learning Module 4: Family Collaboration](#) | DESE

IV-A

Reflection

STANDARD IV PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Demonstrates the capacity to reflect on and improve the educator's own practice, using informal means as well as meetings with teams and work groups to gather information, analyze data, examine issues, set meaningful goals, and develop new approaches in order to improve teaching and learning.

KEY PRACTICE

Regularly reflects on the effectiveness of lessons, units, and interactions with students, both individually and with colleagues, and uses insights gained to improve practice and student learning.

FOCUS FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT ON:

- ▶ Recognizing that teaching in hybrid and remote settings will continue to require new learning, and reflecting on what works and what needs to shift in a remote teaching context on a regular, ongoing basis
- ▶ Adopting an inquiry-based approach to learning and reflection, and adjusting practice that's familiar as well as acquiring practice that's new
- ▶ Valuing input and feedback from colleagues, students, and families when reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching and learning

IV-C

Professional Collaboration

STANDARD IV PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Collaborates effectively with colleagues on a wide range of tasks.

KEY PRACTICE

Consistently and effectively collaborate with colleagues on teaching and learning.

FOCUS FEEDBACK, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORT ON:

- ▶ Collaborating with colleagues to differentiate roles and responsibilities in adapting and implementing standards-based units and well-structured lessons, and planning to ensure coherence in instructional delivery and sequencing
- ▶ Sharing best practices for supporting students to engage and learn, including strategies to build community and welcome students back, support their social emotional health and wellbeing, and honor their lived experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism
- ▶ Collaboratively planning with content/SPED/ESL teachers to align instruction and coordinate scaffolding for English learners, particularly when the teaching and learning will span in-person and remote learning settings
- ▶ Collaborating around and sharing common family engagement strategies and supports for student learning to build coherence in family engagement across grades and subject areas

RESOURCES

Reflection

[Fostering Community During Remote Learning Teacher Reflection Guide](#) | WeTeachNYC

[Engaging Students During Remote Learning Teacher Reflection Guide](#) | WeTeachNYC

[Recognizing and Honoring Community Cultural Wealth During Remote Learning](#) | WeTeachNYC

[7 Shifts: Where Is Your School or Organization?](#) | Search Institute

Professional Collaboration

[Teacher Collaboration During a Global Pandemic](#) *Educational Leadership*

[Collaborative Planning Templates for Content/ESL/SPED Teachers](#) | *Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence*

[Remote Teaching and Learning Module 5: Professional Collaboration](#) | DESE